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FM AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3242

INFO ZEN/AMCONSUL DOUALA (POUCH)

BT

C O N F I D E N T I A L YAOUNDE 0988

E.O. 12065: GDS 2/3/88 (BANDLER, DONALD) OR-P

TAGS: PINT, PINS, SHUM, CM

SUBJECT: CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST IN FOUR ALLEGED POLITICAL
PRISONERS IN CAMEROON (S/S NO. 8201259)

STATE 17916

1. (LOU) THIS IS AN INTERIM REPLY TO REFTEL REQUESTING INFORMATION FOR SENATOR TSONGAS ON FOUR CAMEROONIANS ALLEGEDLY HELD WITHOUT TRIAL SINCE 1976.

2. (C) AS DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, THE CAMEROON GOVERNMENT IS EXTREMELY SENSITIVE TO INQUIRIES ABOUT MATTERS SUCH AS THIS WHICH IN ITS VIEW TOUCH ON NATIONAL SECURITY CONCERNS. WHAT INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE IS GENERALLY BASED ON THIRD HAND REPORTS, AND RUMORS WITH OBSCURE OR UNRELIABLE SOURCING. CAMEROONIAN OFFICIALS ARE NOT AUTHORIZED TO DISCUSS SUCH MATTERS WITH FOREIGNERS; SOME INFORMATION WHICH FILTERS THROUGH IS EXAGGERATED AND PROBABLY COMES FROM OPPONENTS OF THE AHIDJO REGIME.

3. (C) POLOFF DISCUSSED THIS CASE ON AN "OFF THE RECORD" BASIS WITH SEVERAL CONTACTS WHO ARE KNOWLEDGEABLE IN THE SUBJECT AREA. UNFORTUNATELY, NONE OF THE SOURCES

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WAS ABLE TO SHED LIGHT ON THE PLIGHT OF CONDITION OF THE FOUR PRISONERS REFERRED TO IN REFTEL. OUR CONTACTS DID NOT KNOW ANY OF THE FOUR PERSONALLY, AND WERE UNABLE TO CONFIRM THAT THEY WERE CURRENTLY BEING HELD IN DETENTION. TWO OF OUR CONTACTS HAD SEEN THE NAMES IN THE 1981 AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORT ON CAMEROON. NONE OF THE SOURCES CONTESTED THE ALLEGATION THAT A NUMBER OF CAMEROONIANS, PROBABLY NOW REDUCED TO FOUR, HAD BEEN HELD WITHOUT TRIAL SINCE 1976. DESPITE THE FACT THAT THEY ARE OTHERWISE VERY WELL INFORMED, SOURCES WERE PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE CHANCES OF GETTING RELIABLE INFORMATION. SEVERAL OF THEM PROMISED TO MAKE FURTHER INQUIRIES AND REPORT THE RESULTS. EMBASSY WILL CONTINUE TO SEEK INFORMATION ON THIS SUBJECT, AND REPORT ANY RELEVANT FINDINGS.

HORAN

END OF MESSAGE

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